

ENSURING CONSISTENCY ACROSS NUTRITION COORDINATION COMMITTEES: COMPOSITION, ROLES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Malnutrition is a serious problem in Uganda that affects the health and well-being of children and adults and compromises the nation's economic productivity. To address the problem, the Government of Uganda developed the Uganda Nutrition Action Plan 2011–2016 (UNAP), which provides a multi-sectoral framework to coordinate efforts to address the multiple causes of malnutrition at the individual, household, and societal levels across all government sectors. At the local government level, the country established district nutrition coordination committees (DNCCs) to coordinate these efforts at the district level. The DNCC concept was extended to lower local government through a network of nutrition coordination committees (NCCs) in municipalities, town councils, sub-counties, and divisions.

Between late 2012 and 2014, Uganda's Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) Nutrition Secretariat and its partners oriented 112 districts on the mandate of DNCCs, as outlined in the UNAP. However, because the UNAP did not include benchmarks for DNCC performance or provide details about their broadly defined roles and responsibilities, DNCCs did not know what was expected of them. In addition, there was no way to determine if they were performing satisfactorily or meeting a minimum standard of quality. To address these issues, stakeholders worked together to clearly define DNCC roles and responsibilities and to further clarify DNCC membership to ensure consistency across the country. The decisions agreed upon through this stakeholder consensus-building process, undertaken as part of the DNCC Initiative, have since been applied to NCCs at all levels of lower local government. This brief describes NCC composition and influencing actors, NCC roles and responsibilities in strengthening nutrition



Photo credit: Anita Komukama/FANTA

Stakeholders worked together to clearly define NCC roles and responsibilities that could be applied to all levels of local government and to further clarify NCC membership to ensure consistency across the country.

governance, and the tools and processes for monitoring NCC performance.

NCC Membership

In the past, the composition of NCCs varied greatly across local governments. Stakeholders decided that establishing composition criteria would introduce a minimum standard to ensure that NCCs are truly multi-sectoral coordination mechanisms for nutrition. They identified NCC core membership and influencing

actors, creating a comprehensive picture of how individuals engage to carry out and influence nutrition governance actions at the local government level.

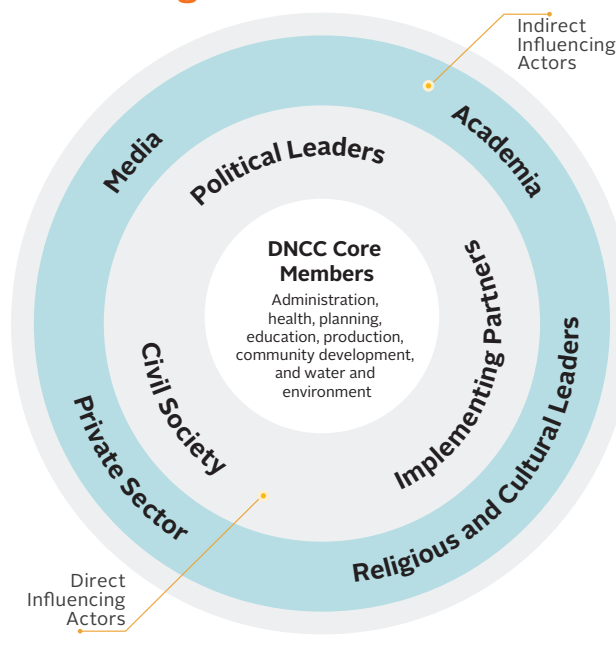
Core Membership

The stakeholders agreed that NCC core membership should include local government representatives from the administration, health, planning, education, production, community development, trade and industry, and water departments (see Figure 1). In addition to department membership, each NCC must have a designated Nutrition Focal Point Officer (NFPO), whose role is to coordinate the nutrition planning process and NCC reporting. The NFPO is designated by the local government’s accounting officer¹ and should be a senior member of the Technical Planning Committee (TPC) to ensure that nutrition remains high on the local government agenda. According to the stakeholders, having a nutrition technical expert available to advise the NCC is also necessary to ensure that the local government nutrition plans and activities are technically sound and meet nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive objectives. Further discussion between OPM and the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG) is needed to identify the best way to ensure that NCCs have access to this technical expertise, especially at the lower local government levels.

Influencing Actors

In addition to the core NCC members, many other actors influence the local nutrition agenda. NCC members should engage and work with these actors. Direct NCC influencing actors include political leaders, civil society, and implementing partners. Because these actors have both financial and technical resources and political influence, they can be effective supporters of NCC operations even though they are not part of the core NCC membership. NCCs should engage with them to advance shared goals that are appropriate for the local context, as these actors are well placed to mobilize nutrition resources and can contribute technical assistance in areas such as data collection. NCCs should also engage

Figure 1: NCC Core Membership and Influencing Actors



with indirect influencing actors such as academia, religious and cultural leaders, the media, and the private sector. Each of these actors has a sphere of influence in the community and access to platforms through which to conduct nutrition advocacy and behaviour change communication. NCCs should also keep national stakeholders in mind, including development partners and government sectors. While such actors do not directly engage with the NCCs on a regular basis, they can influence decisions that affect NCC operations through their work with influencing actors, such as implementing partners operating at the local government level.

NCC Roles and Responsibilities

Stakeholders agreed upon six areas of responsibility for NCCs to strengthen nutrition governance at the local government level and ensure the implementation of multi-sectoral nutrition interventions. NCC responsibilities include:

- **Technical guidance:** NCCs provide nutrition technical guidance at all local government levels, including to departments, partners, technical planning committees (TPCs), and councils, to ensure proper nutrition planning and quality of service delivery.

¹ The accounting officer role is fulfilled by the following individuals at each level of local government: district – chief administrative officer (CAO); municipality – town clerk; division – senior assistant town clerk; town council – town clerk; and sub-county – sub-county chief/senior assistant secretary.

This also includes identification of capacity strengthening needs.

- **Coordination and partnership with nutrition stakeholders:**

NCCs provide a platform through which nutrition stakeholders can share information and build consensus on how best to address nutrition problems, use available resources, and harmonise the implementation of nutrition activities in the local government. NCCs also have the responsibility to identify and build partnerships with nutrition stakeholders who can contribute to local government nutrition goals and objectives.

- **Monitoring and reporting:** NCCs conduct joint monitoring and support supervision visits to lower local government NCCs, departments, and partners to provide oversight of activity implementation. NCCs are also responsible for submitting quarterly reports. Reporting tools capture progress on nutrition governance activities and on the implementation of activities in the multi-sectoral nutrition action plan.
- **Planning, budgeting, and resource mobilisation:** NCCs ensure integration and alignment of nutrition interventions in all local government development planning frameworks, including development plans, multi-sectoral nutrition action plans, annual work plans, and budgets. NCCs should also mobilise internal and external resources to address resource gaps (e.g., local revenues, partners, and through proposal development).
- **Advocacy:** NCCs should conduct advocacy to raise nutrition awareness among their local government leaders. NCCs should also identify and work with nutrition champions to support advocacy efforts..
- **Nutrition behaviour change communication (BCC) and social mobilisation:** NCCs should utilise available platforms such as the media, community dialogue meetings (barazas), and community outreach to carry out behaviour change communication for nutrition. NCCs should also take the lead in ensuring that nutrition BCC messaging and social mobilisation efforts are harmonised across partners and lower local governments.

NCC members should receive official letters of assignment from the local government's

accounting officer to formalize their commitment to these roles and responsibilities.

Monitoring NCC Performance

Having clearly defined roles and responsibilities for NCCs enables performance monitoring. OPM, with support from FANTA, developed monitoring and support supervision checklists to track the performance of district and lower local government NCCs. The checklist has a section for each of the six responsibility areas as well as a section on NCC composition. During monitoring and support supervision visits, fulfilment of roles and responsibilities can be tracked, challenges can be identified, and support actions can be planned. Monitoring and support supervision visits should occur on a quarterly basis.

The Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Technical Committee, under the leadership of OPM, conducts quarterly monitoring and support supervision visits to the DNCCs. Lower local government NCCs (municipalities, town councils, and sub-counties) are monitored by the DNCCs. Municipal nutrition coordination committees (MNCCs) are responsible for supervision visits to their division nutrition coordination committees (DiNCCs).

NCC Capacity Strengthening

NCC capacity must be strengthened over time so that members can fulfill their nutrition governance roles and responsibilities. Capacity strengthening is a long-term investment that requires continuous mentoring and support. To begin implementing multi-sectoral nutrition activities in their local governments, newly formed NCCs require immediate support to strengthen skills in planning, budgeting, resource mobilization, stakeholder and activity coordination, and advocacy. Depending upon their nutrition priorities and plans, local governments may require department-specific training to strengthen NCC and department capacity to provide technical guidance and to direct BCC and social mobilization activities. Finally, as activity implementation begins, NCCs require an orientation on the standardized tools for monitoring and reporting.

Resources to support capacity strengthening as well as the standard monitoring and support supervision checklists and reporting template are available online at nutrition.opm.go.ug.

The DNCC Initiative

Uganda's Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) Nutrition Secretariat and the Ministry of Local Government, in collaboration with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and with technical support from the Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance III Project (FANTA) and the Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (CDI), undertook a 2-year initiative to strengthen nutrition leadership and governance at both the national and district levels. This effort, called the District Nutrition Coordination Committee (DNCC) Initiative, had three main objectives:

- To strengthen the national oversight and support structure for the DNCCs
- To enhance awareness of and commitment to nutrition among local stakeholders including technical and political leaders, implementing partners, and community members

- To strengthen DNCC capacity to plan, budget, leverage existing resources for, advocate for, and monitor nutrition activities

The DNCC Initiative focused on 10 districts in the southwest (Kamwenge, Kasese, Kisoro, Ntungamo, and Sheema) and north (Amuru, Dokolo, Lira, Masindi, and Oyam). The initiative engaged stakeholders from many government sectors at the national and district levels—including health, agriculture, gender and social development, education, planning, water, trade and industry, and administration—as well as development and implementing partners. For more information on the DNCC Initiative visit: nutrition.opm.go.ug/index.php/approach/



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